Courage, Sacrifice, and Duty

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Veterans are those brave men and women who waged war so that we have peace. As these individuals boldly practiced their beliefs in the name of freedom, they have changed the course of history. Time and time again – along the beaches of Normandy and in South Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan --- veterans have struggled to secure our liberty. In doing so, they have defined courage, sacrifice, and duty.

What is courage? One veteran told his soldier son "Remember that courage is not the absence of fear, but the willingness to face it." Our veterans have answered every opportunity to defend with a firm "yes, sir" and have gone on to parry every threat with blood and sweat. Courage is what made a platoon leader throw himself on top of a bomb to save his comrades. Courage is what lead soldiers to place their existence in jeopardy as they carried injured soldiers off the battlefield. Their love for America trumped their fear and accompanied them on and off of the battlefield.

At one point, all veterans made the decision to fight. This decision required enormous sacrifice. They have sacrificed precious time with their families, birthdays, and holidays. They have forgone home-cooked meals and personal comforts. Moreover, they were willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for America.

However their sense of duty is what gave purpose to their sacrifices. All Americans feel duty towards their country, but veterans have felt it to its true extent. Some fought to protect, others to spread freedom. However, all fought in the spirit of patriotism. Duty is why American veterans have emerged from war weary and stricken, but never beaten.

The younger generation owes everything – our freedom, our culture, and our peaceful livelihood – to our veterans' sacrifices. Our duty as citizens is to say 'thank you.' In doing so, I iterate Walt Whitman's timeless words:

"The moon gives you light, And the bugles and the drums give you music, And my heart, O my soldiers, my veterans, My heart gives you love."